

**“As Solomon, so I above all things have desired wisdom”—  
Elizabeth I, Biblical Analogies, and the Catholic Threat of the 1580s**

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Biblical figures—particularly from the Old Testament—were a key component of Elizabethan royal iconography. As is well established in the scholarship, in her own writings and speeches, and in the polemic tracts of her supporters, Elizabeth was compared with various figures from the Bible. These comparisons with figures such as Deborah, Solomon, David, Daniel, Esther, and Judith all served as a potent religio-political tool: one that simultaneously allowed Elizabeth to demonstrate the divine precedent for a decision (or indeed, lack of decision), while also allowing her subjects to counsel her to emulate the actions of a providentially favoured biblical figure. These biblical analogies, however, also sit beside, and overlap with, the various pagan analogies that were invoked, particularly those between Elizabeth and the classical virgin goddesses. The scholarship generally treats the parallel existence of these two types of analogies as some kind of dilemma, with various hypotheses proposed to explain the purported waxing and waning of these analogies across Elizabeth’s reign, with particular focus on the supposed supplanting of the biblical figures with the classical ones.

This paper argues that the fluctuations of the appearance of an analogy cannot be read as a sign of the figure’s disfavour, or ‘unfashionableness’. Instead, I argue that the invoking of biblical analogies was predominantly tied to a specific event. This paper counters claims of the waning popularity of Elizabeth’s Old Testament biblical analogies in the latter third of her reign by considering the aftermath of the events of 1586 and 1588, arguing that biblical analogies were drawn throughout the entirety of Elizabeth’s reign, but only when the connection made sense.